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A

# Funeral SERMON

On the late Reverend

Mr. *SIMON BROWNE*.

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FRANCIS SERMON



MR. J. V. BROWN

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*The Rectitude of Providence under  
the Severest Dispensations.*

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A

# Funeral Sermon

On the late Reverend

Mr. *SIMON BROWNE*:

PREACH'D at

SHEPTON-MALLET

DECEMBER 31. 1732.

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By ANTHONY ATKEY.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane. 1733.

[Price Sixpence.]

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The Records of Providence under  
the Ancient Dispensation.

Universal Edition

On the Mountain



STEPHEN M. ALLEN

PROPRIETOR

ANTHONY ATKIN

LONDON

Printed for A. Roberts in Strand Lane, 1733.  
[Price Sixpence.]



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P R E F A C E

T H E

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**T**HE Reverend Divine, whose Decease gave occasion to this Discourse, was a Person of such Accomplishments, and had made so considerable a Figure in the learned World, that an Account of his Life and Character might reasonably be expected by the Publick, as a Piece of Justice to his Memory. This Expectation, I imagined, would before this Time have been fully answered by some abler Hand.

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## P R E F A C E.

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*But as nothing of that Kind hath, nor  
(as far as I can learn upon Inquiry)  
is likely to appear; the same Reasons  
which at first induced me to preach,  
have now prevailed on me to print the  
following Discourse.*

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A

# Funeral SERMON

On the late Reverend

Mr. *SIMON BROWNE.*

JEREM. xii. 1.

*Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments.*

**T**H E extraordinary Affliction with which God saw fit, for so long a Time, to exercise that faithful Servant of his, whom we now lament, conducted my Thoughts to the Words which I have read, as the most suitable Argument for a Discourse on his Funeral.

THE Sense of the Text may easily be resolved into these two plain Propositions :

B

I. THAT

I. THAT there is something in the Conduct of Providence, which, at the first View, appears perplexing even unto good Men.

II. AND that however Persons of such a Character may permit themselves to reason on the Ways of God, they are brought at last truly to conclude, that *all his Doings are Righteous*, though they do not always perceive the Grounds of the Divine Conduct.

I AM willing to say something on both these Heads; which yet I shall endeavour to contract as far as I am able, that I may neither trespass upon your Patience, nor be injurious to the Memory of an able Minister of Christ, whose Praise is in the Gospel throughout the Churches. I begin with the

*1st Observation.* THERE is something in the Conduct of Providence, which, on a sudden View, appears perplexing even to good Men: Something, which Men of real Piety and Virtue are, in their first Thoughts, apt to consider as not so well consistent with the Wisdom, Goodness, and Equity of Heaven. That wicked and atheistical Men should freely censure the Conduct of Things, is not at all strange. They have nothing to restrain them from Impiety, no Love of Truth, no Fear of God, nor any Knowledge of his Ways. Ps. xcii. 5, 6. *O Lord, how great are thy Works, and thy Thoughts are very deep. A brutish Man knoweth not, neither doth a Fool understand this!* But that virtuous and good Men, whose

whose Minds are possessed with a Reverence for the Deity, who from that Love which they bear towards him, are prejudiced (if I may be allow'd the Expression) on the side of Providence, and who are wont to study the Ways of God, and consider wisely of his Doings; that such Men, I say, should at any time be tempted to question the Divine Conduct, is something surprizing. And yet, if we consult the holy Scriptures, we shall find this was sometimes the Case of even inspired Persons; and upon no Occasion more common than that suggested by the Prophet immediately after my Text; the observing the Prosperity of the Wicked, and the contrary Condition of many righteous Persons in the present State; ver. 2—4. *Wherefore doth the Way of the Wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal treacherously?—How long shall the Land mourn, and the Herbs of every Field wither, for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein? Expostulations of the like Nature we meet with in many other Parts of Scripture. Thus in the Book of Job; Wherefore do the Wicked live, become old, and mighty in Power? Their Seed is established in their Sight with them, and their Off-spring before their Eyes. Their Houses are safe from Fear; neither is the Rod of God upon them. Their Bull gendreth, and faileth not: their Cow calveth, and casteth not her Calf. They send forth their little ones like a Flock, and their Children dance. They take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoice at the Sound of the Organ. They spend their Days in Wealth, and in a Moment go down to the Grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what*



what Profit have we, if we pray unto him? Chap. xxi. 7—15. And the Psalmist, O Lord God, to whom Vengeance belongeth: O God, to whom Vengeance belongeth, shew thy self; lift up thy self, thou Judge of the Earth: render a Reward to the Proud. Lord, how long shall the Wicked, how long shall the Wicked triumph; how long shall they utter and speak false Things, and all the Workers of Iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces thy People, O Lord, and afflict thine Heritage. They slay the Widow and the Stranger; and they murder the Fatherless: Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it, Ps. xciv. 1—7. We find the Prophet Habakkuk complaining in the same manner: O Lord, how long shall I cry unto thee, and thou wilt not hear? even cry out unto thee of Violence, and thou wilt not save? Why dost thou shew me Iniquity, and cause me to behold Grievance? For Spoiling and Violence are before me, and there are that raise up Strife and Contention. Therefore the Law is slack'd, and Judgement doth never go forth. For the Wicked doth compass about the Righteous, therefore wrong Judgement proceedeth. Chap. i. 2—4. These are the Representations, not of the notoriously wicked, and profane, nor of the hypocritical Pretenders to Religion; but they are the Expostulations of holy Men, who were employ'd by Almighty God as Instruments of conveying his Will to Mankind. Not that this was the settled Judgement of these Authors, that God really had no more Regard to the Righteous than to the Wicked. It was only the Thought that first presented upon considering the flourishing Condition of the Wicked, and the Troubles of the Virtuous. Upon a more thorough View of Things they came to another Conclusion.



as I shall have Occasion to shew under the next Head. In the mean time it may be proper to inquire a little, whence it should happen, that there should be any thing in the Divine Proceedings that should give Occasion to good Men so much as to suspect the Equity of them.

It cannot be, that there is really any thing wrong in the Conduct of Infinite Wisdom. Neither should I imagine that it could be any Pleasure to the Deity to puzzle the Ignorance of Mankind. Without any Supposition injurious to the Almighty, this Appearance may be accounted for by a Concurrence of the following Causes: The Depth of the Divine Judgements:—The Shallowness of human Understanding:—And the Proneness even of the best of Men, to make too precipitate a Judgement on Things.

*The Judgements of God are a great Deep; his Righteousness is like the great Mountains; his Mercy is in the Heavens; and his Faithfulness reacheth unto the Clouds. (Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6.)* The Divine Counsels are all formed on the most perfect View of the Universe, and have a Respect to all the infinitely complicated Relations of Things, and the remotest Consequences of Actions. No Wonder then if God's Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as our Ways. For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are his Ways higher than our Ways, and his Thoughts than our Thoughts. (Isa. lv. 8, 9.) Now that which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find out? (Eccles. vii. 24.) Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find

*find out the Almighty to Perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea. (Job xi. 7—9.)* As the Understanding of God is Infinite, it is impossible that it should be comprehended by any Thing less than itself. How vain is it then for human Minds to aspire after it. The most perfect created Understanding could not attain a Knowledge adequate to Infinity. Whatever sees not infinitely, can see nothing perfectly. But how imperfect is human Understanding! We see nothing but the Surface of Things, and even that not very distinctly. After all the Improvements that have been advancing for near six thousand Years, within how narrow Bounds are the Limits of human Knowledge still confined? We know little concerning our selves, the Nature of both Parts of our Constitution, and the Manner of their Union. We know less of the World about us; and when we would undertake to form a Judgement of the Actions of our Fellow-Creatures, how commonly do we find our selves mistaken, and are forced to confess our Ignorance in that common Form of Admiration, Who could have thought it? If we know so little of earthly Things, how should we understand the more distant Things of Heaven? *As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child, even so thou knowest not the Works of God who maketh all. (Eccles. xi. 5.)* Now from the Depth of divine Knowledge, and the Greatness of human Ignorance, it necessarily follows, that many Steps of Providence must to our  
Sight

Sight appear with great Disadvantage. We can see but a Part, and therefore are incapable of judging upon the whole.

HOWEVER, this would be attended with little Inconvenience, if, where we knew we had not all before us, we could prevail with our selves to suspend Judgement, and be contentedly ignorant. *But vain Man would be wise, though he be born like a wild Ass's Colt.* (Job xi. 12.) And it is this Desire of Knowledge that leads us astray. We would know too soon, and for that Reason we do not know at all. Undoubtedly the Desire of Knowledge is not only a lawful, but laudable Passion. But even that, when it is not kept within proper Regulations, like the rest of the Passions negligently governed, it frustrates our great End by too violent a Pursuit of it. We might discover more Truth, if we had the Patience to pursue it a little more leisurely : At least we should be more secure from wrong Judgement, if we were less hasty to pronounce. And indeed, the wrong Appearances of Things would lead us into very few Errors, if we were not too forward to conclude, that Things are in themselves always such as they appear to us ; which is too great a Presumption for such short-sighted Creatures as we are.

It would be more modest, and a great deal nearer the Truth, to suppose, that for want of beholding Things at the proper Point of View, and our not being able to see through the whole Compass of the Design, that which to us appears irregular and confused, may really be most beautiful

siful and orderly. But Men are too apt to magnify their own Abilities, and too backward to acknowledge their Ignorance: and as the best of Men are not entirely exempt from this Weakness, the Precipitancy of their Judgement does sometimes occasion their arraigning the Conduct of Providence from a partial View of the Case. But though good Men may for a Time be stumbled upon this Account, they cannot be supposed to settle in an Opinion dishonourable to the Deity. Which leads us to the

2d. *Observation*: THAT however Persons of such a Character may permit themselves to reason on the Ways of God, they are brought at last truly to conclude, that *he is Righteous in all his Doings*. The same Persons, whose Complaints upon this Head I have related, have, on a more perfect View of Things, professed themselves satisfied with the Equity of the Divine Conduct, and thereby discovered that they had judged too hastily concerning the Prosperity of the Wicked, or the Afflictions of the Righteous. *How oft (says Job) is the Candle of the Wicked put out, and how oft cometh their Destruction upon them? God distributeth Sorrows in his Anger. They are as Stubble before the Wind, and as Chaff that the Storm carrieth away. God layeth up his Iniquity for his Children. He rewardeth him, and he shall know it. His Eyes shall see his Destruction, and he shall drink of the Wrath of the Almighty. For what Pleasure hath he in his House after him, when the Number of his Months is cut off in the midst? (Job xxvi. 17 — 21.)* The Psalmist, who had acknowledged his Feet were almost gone, and his Steps bad well nigh slipped, when

seeing



seeing the Prosperity of the Wicked he was envious at the Foolish, acknowledges that upon going into the Sanctuary of God, he was convinced of his Mistake, and saw the End of the Wicked. Surely, says he, thou didst set them in slippery Places. Thou castest them down into Destruction. How are they brought into Desolation as in a Moment! They are utterly consumed with Terror. And therefore the Conclusion in which he rests is this; Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean Heart. (Ps. lxxiii. 1, 17, 18, 19.) To the same Purpose he discourseth elsewhere: *The Wicked watcheth the Righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The Lord will not leave him in his Hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the Lord, and keep his Way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the Land; when the Wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the Wicked in great Power, and spreading himself like a green Bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright; for the End of that Man is Peace. But the Transgressors shall be destroyed together; the End of the Wicked shall be cut off.* (Ps. xxxvii. 32—38.) And notwithstanding the Expostulations which were quoted from the Prophet Habakkuk, such was, upon the whole, his Confidence in the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, that he scruples not to say, *Altho' the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olives shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat; the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* And indeed, a Persuasion of the Moral Perfections of God, his Righteousness,  
C Goodness,

Goodness, and Veracity, is absolutely essential to Religion. Nor can there be any such Thing as Piety, properly so called, where such Sentiments of God are wanting. Almighty Power, conducted arbitrarily and unmercifully, would create unavoidably a continual Dread of it in human Minds. But this would not be the Fear of a God, nor could it answer any Purposes of Religion. Because on this Supposition, Obedience could be no Security; nor would it be possible to know by what Means such a kind of Deity could be pleased; or to be certain, that what recommended us to his Favour this Day, would not have a contrary Effect the very next. Religion is founded on the Belief of a Being, infinitely knowing, just and good; and who can no more be otherwise, than he can cease to be. With the Belief of such a Being, all the Duties of Piety become reasonable. We pray to him for what we want, because we know he is able and ready to help us. We thank him for what we enjoy, because we are persuaded it has proceeded from his Benevolence, as much as from his Power. And we acknowledge our Faults, because we believe him propitious, slow to Anger, and easy to pardon the Penitent. Nothing therefore can tend more to confirm us in Religion, than the strengthening these Sentiments of the Deity. Let us then enquire a little what Reason we have to believe of God in this manner. There is, in the Nature of Things, a Difference between Actions. Some are fit, others unfit; some right, others wrong; some just, others unjust. There is also a Difference between Pleasure and Pain, Happiness and Misery. The one is in itself good, the other evil. An Infinite



Infinite Understanding, as is that of God, which sees all Things as they are, must perceive this Difference: And if he perceives it, he must act according to it, by doing Right, and forbearing Wrong. He cannot unnecessarily withhold Pleasure, or cause Misery to any of his Creatures. This may farther be confirmed, by shewing that all the possible Causes of Unrighteousness or Cruelty, can have no Place in the Deity. A Creature may do ill ignorantly: But an All-knowing Being cannot be ignorant. A Creature may be depraved by a Defect in his Constitution; but an All-perfect Being can have no Depravity of Will. We may be hinder'd from doing the Good we would by the Bounds of our Power: But Infinite Power can have no Bounds. In a Word, We, through Envy or Malice, may deprive our Fellow-Creatures of their Happiness; but a Self-existent Being, who as such must be Self-sufficient, can envy no Creature that Measure of Happiness he imparted to it, and which he himself could not lose by bestowing upon others.

THERE is another Method of establishing this Point, which to some may appear more convincing, namely, from the general Marks of Wisdom, Goodness, and Rectitude in all the Works of God. It is notorious to every one, that makes any Observation on the Works of Nature, that the whole Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord: That all Things are contrived for the best upon the whole; and that those Things which have a contrary Appearance, are the unusual Effects of a general Rule established for the common Good. We see enough to convince us,

that so much Design, so many admirable Productions, such curious Mechanism, so happy a Mixture of Uniformity and Variety, could not be the Effect of Chance or dark Necessity. And where, in the main, we observe so many Instances of Wisdom and Goodness, it is but Justice to believe, that there is the like Workmanship in all; and that those Parts which to us appear in another View, if rightly considered, would be found all of a Piece. The like may be said concerning the Works of Providence. Every Man may perceive that the Lord is gracious, having tasted daily of his Bounty. He sees numberless Occasions in the Course of his Life, to admire the Goodness of God in securing him from Dangers to which he was exposed, and in making those Things, which at first had a more dismal Aspect, turn to his Advantage. And from hence we should be taught to reason, as in the former Case, that where there has been so much of Kindness and good Will in repeated Instances, what has another Appearance cannot proceed from want of Love. For if God had not really an Affection for his Creatures, why did he make them to such Advantage? Why does he with a liberal Hand hourly shower down Blessings upon their Heads, and crown their Years with his Loving-kindness? Malice would be uniformly cruel. If the Deity had an Inclination to act invidiously, he could not want the Power of making us compleatly miserable. Thus far our Reasoning on the Nature and Perfections of God, his Works of Creation and Providence, would help to confirm us in the Belief of his perfect Goodness and Justice. And though to one who acknowledges nothing

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of Revelation it will have no Weight, yet those, who understand the Loving-kindness of the Lord, and have observed the Propriety and Beauty of the various Dispensations of Providence recorded in Scripture, will see Reason to cry out with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* (Rom. xi. 33.)

HITHERTO we have only in general endeavoured to maintain the Equity of the Divine Conduct. It will be proper to say something concerning that particular Difficulty above-mentioned, *the Prosperity of the Wicked; and the Afflictions of the Righteous.* And here I would desire you to observe the following Things; That we cannot always know what is really prosperous or adverse—that we can with little more Certainty pronounce who are the Righteous, and who are the Wicked—that in the natural Course of Things, Virtue certainly has a Tendency to promote Happiness, and Vice tends to make Men miserable—and that however the natural Course of Things may be interrupted in Time, this will certainly be the Consequence in Eternity.

1. WE cannot always know what is really prosperous or adverse. That may to us look like an Advantage which is the greatest Unhappiness. There have been many Instances in which Riches have been kept for the Owners of them to their Hurt; and it has evidently been seen, that Men, who were before in a very desirable State, by having a Flow of Riches upon them, have been  
intoxi-

intoxicated with the Change of Life, and at last brought themselves far below what they were at their first setting out: And yet notwithstanding we will call those fortunate Persons, when their Prosperity has been the very Thing that destroy'd them. The like may be said of Adversity. *Joseph*, no doubt, thought it hard to be carried from his Father's House, and sold by his own Brethren for a Slave into a distant Country. His Hopes, it is likely, were a little raised on his finding so much Favour in the Sight of his Master. But what Apprehensions must he have to find himself reduced to a Prison? And how greatly must he have been shocked, to consider that his Virtue had brought him thither? Had he hearkened to the Sollicitations of his Mistress, he would probably have maintained his former State; his Crime might have been concealed, and his Master trusted him as before. But he feared God; and while he endeavoured to preserve his Fidelity to his Lord, under a false Accusation was cast into Prison, and suffered for the Offence which had he committed, he might have escaped with Impunity: For a long Time, it is probable, he was not a little perplexed at this. But at last the whole Mystery was unfolded; his Prison raised him to a Court, and very near the Throne: and by his Station in *Egypt*, he became capable of supporting his Father and his Brethren under a Famine. Again,

2. WE cannot always with Certainty say, who are righteous, and who are wicked. Actions that are notorious we may see: but the Principles of Actions are for the most part out of our Sight; and



and yet it is from these chiefly that the Characters of Mankind are to be taken. A great deal of Good may be done by those who had at the same Time no good End in doing it; and many evil Actions may be committed, from a Defect of Understanding more than a Depravity of Will. We know the Evil that is done; but we do not know the Circumstances under which the Authors of it were, nor the Temptations by which they were wrought upon; and yet these must be taken in to form a Judgment of the Proportion of the Guilt. Let me add, that there are many Vices which fall not under human Observation; many secret Sins which may be concealed under the Profession of Religion; and many good Actions which may be performed more privately: upon which Account it is impossible for us to say infallibly, this is a virtuous Man, that is a Sinner. Not to mention that the Failings of the best of Men may justly expose them to some temporal Penalties, and the present Prosperity of wicked Men may be some kind of Retribution for that small Mixture of Good which may be found even in the very worst. Farther,

3. In the natural Course of Things, Virtue certainly tends to promote Happiness, and Vice has a Tendency to Misery. Piety naturally tends to give a Calm and Composure to the Mind, by assuring it of the Divine Favour and Protection. Honesty and Benevolence are calculated to promote and forward a Man in Business, to gain him Credit and Friends. Temperance and Chastity will serve to preserve the Constitution of the Body, and the Vigour of the Faculties of the Soul. Vice,  
on

on the contrary, tends to Misery. Impiety and Profaneness expose Men to the severe Lashes of a guilty Conscience, and the Horrors of Divine Wrath. Knavery and Falsehood give an incurable Wound to the Reputation. Malice and Revenge are the ready Way to set all the World against us. And Intemperance is as likely a Course as a Man can take to bring himself to a Prison or a Grave. These are the Rewards naturally recommending Virtue, and discouraging from Vice. And as they are the Effects of that Constitution of Things which the Creator first wisely settled, so are they to be considered as Declarations of his approving the one, and condemning the other. For whatever we attribute to *Nature* in vulgar Language, is really to be ascribed to the God of Nature. Nature itself is but a Name.

*Lastly*, HOWEVER the natural Course of Things may be interrupted in Time, in Eternity they will certainly produce their proper Effects, the Virtuous shall be finally happy, and the Vicious finally miserable. And this Consideration perfectly removes the Difficulty. The good Man, in the present Time, enjoys as much Happiness as the general Course of Things (which upon the whole is the best) will allow, and is always happier than any vicious Man in the same Circumstances: But whatever is wanting to make his Happiness compleat, Eternity shall amply supply. The Sinner, even here, is, by his Vices, exposed to Misery, and (excepting the Case of Persecution) is liable to the same external Accidents with the Righteous, and to many more, by reason of his Vices. But if by the Means of a strong natural



natural Constitution, a plentiful hereditary Estate, or uncommon Accidents, he has in some measure escaped the Vengeance due to him in this World, he shall receive it in full Proportion hereafter. *Let not therefore thine Heart envy Sinners : but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long. For surely there is an End, and thine Expectation shall not be cut off.* Prov. xxiii. 17, 18.

THUS I have considered both the Propositions of the Text. From the whole we may draw two Conclusions.

(1) That we ought not to think hardly of our selves, or others, on the Account of the Afflictions which happen to us in Life. For if Affliction may be a Means of procuring the greatest Advantages for us; if it has often been the Lot of the most pious Persons, we should not look upon the Afflicted as Enemies to Religion, or as more wicked than their more prosperous Neighbours. This is adding severely to the Affliction, and betrays the greatest Ignorance of Things. For, perhaps, they are afflicted, because God sees it is for their Benefit. And what it would be unjust to do to others, it would not be less unreasonable to do to our selves upon this Account. Let us not then think hardly of our selves, or judge, that because we suffer more than others, we are greater Sinners than they, especially when our Consciences cannot accuse us of any habitual Wickedness. On the other hand, if, on observing the Prosperity of wicked Men, or the Troubles of the Righteous, we find some Difficulties arising in our Minds concerning the Conduct of Providence,

let us not suspect our selves of Infidelity, provided we do not rest in any Conclusions dishonourable to the Almighty. You see that the best of Men have sometimes been exercised with such perplexing Thoughts. Let us endeavour to get rid of them in the same Manner they did, that is to say, by attending more carefully to the final Issue of Things, and by considering what may be offered in answer to these Difficulties.

(2.) SINCE the Equity of the Conduct of God, where we are capable of examining it, approves itself the more by our Inquiries; and Things, which at first Sight looked unaccountable, appear perfectly regular on a closer Study; let us not censure the Ways of Providence, where, after our best Attention, they are now past finding out. Finite Minds cannot comprehend Infinity. Eternity alone can be sufficient to unfold the whole Scheme of the Divine Counsels. Undoubtedly it will be too early for us to expect a Solution of all Difficulties in the present imperfect State. It is enough for us to be assured, that we shall at last have a more perfect View of Things. In the mean while let us endeavour to prepare our selves for that better State, where we shall *see*, not as now, *through a Glass darkly*, but *Face to Face*; and where we shall *know*, not as here, *in part only*, but *even as we are known*.

HAVING finished what I intended from the Text, it is Time for me to say something concerning that melancholy Providence which directed my Thoughts to the Choice of it; our Loss

of the late Reverend and Learned Mr. *Simon Browne*.

I CANNOT speak upon this Occasion but under many Disadvantages, of which this is not the least, that my Acquaintance with him commenced not till some Time after that unhappy Period, in which it pleased the righteous Disposer of all Things to put an End to his Usefulness in the Capacity of a Minister. And had I had even the Happiness of an earlier Knowledge of him, I should notwithstanding have thought the Character of so eminent a Person deserved to have been drawn by one much more equal to him in Age and Abilities. Nor is it altogether unlikely but that something of this Nature may be undertaken by a more proper Person in another Auditory above. But in the mean time, it would, I believe, be Matter of Surprize to every one here, should such a Man be permitted to leave us in Silence; and indeed, it would be a Reflection on us to have it said, that so much Virtue and Knowledge died unlamented in a Place where it ought most of all to have been valued.

AND as the Benefit I have received from his instructive Conversation, since my Residence in this Place, hath laid me under more particular Obligations to him, I shall, upon that Account also (as well as in Compliance with your just Expectations) endeavour to discharge this Part as well as I can. For I had much rather, at any Time, have my Capacity brought in question, than fall under the least Suspicion of Ingratitude.

It will be needless in this Audience to say any thing of his Birth or Family : But, if I am not mistaken, it will hereafter be accounted an Honour to *Shepton-mallet* to have given Birth, and so many Years of Residence, to so great a Man. Here he laid the first Rudiments of Grammatical Learning (in which he afterwards so much excelled) under the Direction of your late worthy Pastor, Mr. *Cumming*. From hence he removed to *Bridgewater* for the Benefit of Academical Instruction, which he received from the late Rev. Mr. *Moor*. By the Advantage of uncommon Parts, and great Application, he soon became meet for his Master's Use ; and entred upon Preaching some Time before he was twenty Years of Age. Those of the Judicious (who were Auditors of his earliest Performances) thought they had no Reason to censure him for beginning too soon ; and an Aspect grave and manly, as much beyond his Years as his Understanding, removed the usual Prejudices of the Vulgar, and made him universally acceptable.

TALENTS like these could not long be hid, and seldom fail of drawing Attention after them ; and as God had blessed him with Abilities much above the common Rate, so was he pleased to allot him two very eminent Stations for the exerting them. These were the Congregations of Protestant Dissenters at *Portsmouth* in *Hampshire*, and at the *Old Jewry* in *London* ; the one as considerable as most in the Country, and the other inferior to none in the City.

AFTER



AFTER what Manner he behaved in these important Posts, may best be collected from the general Esteem and Affection which he found while he was in them; and the universal Concern that appeared in each, when they were constrained to resign him. For as such Seasons are the truest Tests of the Affection of a Congregation to their Minister; so are they usually the surest Indications of a Pastor's Diligence and Conduct.

HE thought himself obliged to remove from *Portsmouth* upon the probable Prospect of a more extensive Sphere of Usefulness in the Metropolis. With how much Regret his former Charge parted with him, is well known, and may easily be gathered from those pathetick Discourses to them upon his Removal, which he afterwards published. They had however this Consolation, that though he was in a Manner lost to them, he was not lost to the Church. In this the People at the *Old Jewry* were more unhappy; for when they were compell'd to relinquish him, there was little Prospect of his being any otherwise serviceable. To be deprived of a faithful and laborious Pastor in the Flower of his Time, and see him laid aside as useless, though living, was a double Affliction. And how greatly they were affected with it, the many Years they were content to remain unsettled in Hopes of his Recovery, and their uncommon Generosity to him (uncommon I mean to most, but not unusual to themselves) when they were at last obliged to fill up the Vacancy, are sensible Evidences.

THE dark Providence, by which he was rendered incapable of exercising his Office, was a violent Shock, which his Imagination received soon after a complicated domestick Affliction \*. This at first differed little from Distraction, but afterwards settled in a Melancholy, the most unusual that was perhaps ever known. It was this:

HE imagined that Almighty God, by a singular Instance of Divine Power, had, in a gradual Manner, annihilated in him the thinking Substance, and utterly divested him of Consciousness: That though he retained the human Shape, and the Faculty of Speaking, in a Manner that appeared to others rational, he had all the while no more Notion of what he said than a Parrot. And very consistently with this he looked upon himself as no longer a moral Agent, a Subject of Reward or Punishment. In this Persuasion he persisted to the very last. He would own he had greatly been mistaken in the Measure of the Consumption God had been pleased to make in him, having imagined it had been compleated when it was not. But he was confident, that at length the thinking Powers were intirely taken from him; and nothing grieved him more, than that he could not persuade others to think of him in the same Manner. He sometimes considered this as a questioning his Veracity, which still affected him in the tenderest Manner. He often took great Pains, by the most solemn Affe-

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\* The Loss of a beloved Wife, and an only Son.



verations, to remove such an Imputation; and in one of the last Conversations I had with him, asserted the Sincerity of his Declarations concerning himself as with his dying Breath. At other Times, and in a more gloomy Hour, he would represent the Incredulity, which was manifested towards him, as a judicial Effect of the same Divine Power, that had occasioned this strange Alteration in him, as if God had determined to proceed against him in this Way, and would have no Application made in his Behalf. Upon this Account, for a long while, he was unwilling that any Prayers should be made for him, which, he would say, could be warranted by nothing but a Faith in Miracles.

YET, in the latter Part of his Time, he became desirous of the Prayers of Christians, provided they would suppose it was possible for him to be in the Right, and represent his Case as it was; otherwise he said it was not Praying for him. We were willing to interpret this small Alteration as a favourable Symptom of his being restored to himself before he died. But Heaven had determined otherwise. His Melancholy was of such a Nature, as to give him less Trouble than some other Species of it. He had little or no Terror upon his Mind: He considered himself as one who, tho' he had little to hope, had no more to fear, and was therefore, for the most part, calm and composed; and when the Conversation did not turn upon himself, as it was rational and generally very serious, so was it often very cheerful and pleasant. What was most extraordinary in his Case, was this, that, excepting the

the single Point I have mentioned, on which the Distraction turned, his Imagination was not only more lively (which is less to be wondered at) but, (in the Opinion of those who knew him before, and since) his Judgement was even improved beyond what it was in his more flourishing Times.

THE Years of his Retirement (however uncomfortable to himself) were not spent idly or unprofitably. For some Time he amused himself with translating several Parts of the Antient Greek and Latin Poets into *English* Verse. He composed several little Pieces for the Use of Children, an *English* Grammar and Spelling-book, an Abstract of the Scripture History, and a Collection of Fables, both in Metre. With great Labour he amassed together, in a short Compass, all the Themes of the Greek and Latin Tongues; and compiled also a Dictionary to each of those Works, in order to render the Learning of both those Languages more easy and compendious. Not to mention many other Compositions. Of these which I have already mentioned, none have yet appeared in publick. For the two last Years of his Life, he applied himself to the great Controversy of the Time, the Truth of Christianity. And here he was happily prevailed with, to let the World enjoy the Benefit of his Labours. His first Piece on this Argument was written against one, who had taken great Pains to represent the History of our Saviour's Miracles in a ridiculous View. Mr. Browne considered carefully every Thing he had offered on three of these Miracles, that had the Appearance of Argument; and managed

naged the whole Controversy in such a Manner, as to turn his own Weapons most severely back upon himself, and thereby to confirm the Truth of a judicious Observation of a noble Author, That Ridicule, when ill placed, will always fall at last where it deserves, to him that improperly makes use of it. The other and more considerable Performance was, an elaborate Defence of Revelation, against a graver and more subtle Adversary, who had endeavoured to set aside Revelation as useless, under Pretence of vindicating the Perfection of Natural Religion, which notwithstanding he had represented in a very defective Manner. Some of the best Judges have thought this Defence superior to most, and inferior to none, that have appeared on the same Subject.

I WILL only add what tends very much to greatness our Ideas of his Abilities, that both these Works were drawn up by the Strength of his natural Genius, or from the Fund of Knowledge he had formerly laid in. For, during the whole Time of his Retirement, he enjoyed hardly any Advantages from Books or Conversation.

If Life and Health had been longer continued, he intended the settling the Scripture Notion of the Death of Christ as a propitiatory Sacrifice, to have been his next Work. But in the mean time a Complication of Distempers, contracted by his sedentary Life, (for he could not be prevailed with to use Exercise or Recreation) brought on a Mortification, which put a Period to all his Labours, in the fifty second Year of his Age, and the tenth of his Affliction.

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THUS much, but in an imperfect Manner, of his History. Indulge me a few Words concerning his Character, as a *Scholar*, a *Divine*, and a *Christian*. I need say but little on the first of these Heads. From what hath been mentioned already, you will easily perceive that Learning had taken deep Root in him; or, to use the Language of a sacred Writer, that he had *applied his Heart to Understanding, and sought for her as for hid Treasure*. But it is fit I should observe, that he was not more diligent in laying up Knowledge, than he was bountiful in imparting it to every sincere Inquirer. I could speak a great deal feelingly on this Point.—But I forbear—'Tis lost. His Knowledge was very extensive. There was scarce any Art or Science with which he had not some Acquaintance. Hardly could any Topick be started on Affairs of a speculative Nature, or relating to common Life, but he was capable of talking on it judiciously and knowingly: And indeed, he had an admirable Talent of conducting a Conversation agreeably; having a great Command of Expression, joined with uncommon Accuracy, and the Art of enlivening it by many sprightly Narrations. With a great Compass of Learning he had none of the affected Airs of the Pedant, or the ill-natur'd Critick.

As a *Divine*, he was fully instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, and could bring forth out of his Treasure, upon all Occasions, Things new and old. He understood Natural and Revealed Religion well; and had a truer Notion of both, than to suppose there was the least Necessity of  
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advancing the Credit of one, by detracting from the other. He was very earnestly and impartially set upon the Pursuit of Truth; and whether he met with it in the beaten Track, or, as it sometimes happens, in less frequented Paths, it was alike Welcome to him. And this is indeed the true Freedom of Thought.

If he found he had been at any time deceived in his Inquiries, he was as ready to quit his former Sentiments, when they appeared fallacious, as he was at first to entertain them, when they appeared under the Disguise of Truth.

THOUGH he abhorred all kind of Wrangling in Conversation, and knew very well how to deal with such kind of Disputants, he could readily suffer his Tenets to be questioned, and was willing to give a Reason of his Faith to every candid Inquirer. He could never believe that the Favour of Heaven was intailed on any Set of Opinions; and I have often heard him observe, how much juster Notion the poor blind Man in the Gospel had of Divinity, than some of those who would pass under the Character of the greatest Divines, when he concluded, *that if any Man be a Worshiper of God, and doth his Will, him he beareth.*

HE was often very happy in giving Light to obscure Texts of Scripture, and has left behind him several valuable Criticisms on some difficult Passages of St. Paul's Epistles.

HIS Sermons (some of which have appeared in the World) were a prudent Application to the Judgement and Affections of his Audience by a happy Mixture of Reason and Oratory. I speak to many who were well acquainted with his common Method of Preaching, and who have testified their Approbation of it, as well as the inexhaustible Copiousness and Fervour of his Prayers: and I hope they have felt the Benefit of them. He looked upon the explaining and confirming the Evidence of sacred Truth as a useful Employment. But, after all, Practical Religion was nearest his Heart. He was sensible that numberless Errors in Judgement might consist with Sincerity; but that though a Man had all Knowledge, and all Faith, without Charity, a sincere Love to God and Man, he was nothing. He was willing that Men should understand the true Nature and Evidence of their Religion aright: but he was much more earnest to enforce on them the Practice of it.

THIS will more fully appear, when the Close of his last Work (which is a moving Address to *Christians* of all Orders and Denominations, to recommend their Religion by their Lives) shall be made publick. As the former Work may be considered as his dying Attestation to the Truth of Christianity; so this latter may be looked upon as an Oration from the Dead, to quicken the Christian World to their Duty. I hope the Publication of it, especially to those that knew him

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will be rendered more useful by this Circum-  
stance †.

THIS leads me to say something of his Cha-  
racter as a *Christian*.

THOUGH the Nature of his Distemper was such,  
that it would hardly allow him to reckon him-  
self capable of any Acts of Piety, yet it was easy  
to observe, that he always retained a lively Sense  
of the Divine Being on his Mind, and frequently  
expressed it in devout Prayer, of which the  
Families in which he lived were often Witnesses.  
He abhorred all Sorts of Fraud and Hypocrisy,  
and had learned of the Apostle Paul, to renounce  
*the hidden Things of Dishonesty, not walking in Craft-  
iness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but  
in the Manifestation of the Truth, commending him-  
self to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God.*  
Such was his Love of Rectitude, that he could  
not bear the least Deviation from strict Right  
upon any Consideration whatsoever. He esteem'd  
the doing Evil that Good may come, as the worst  
Maxim in the World.

He was a sincere and hearty Friend. He  
could never bring himself to profess a Value for  
any Person where he really had none: He distin-  
guish'd the Friend from the Flatterer; and would  
have made a better Figure in those Days, when  
Integrity was thought essential to Friendship,

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† This *Cloze* has been published since this Sermon was preached,  
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than in a Time, when Faithfulness and Politeness are considered as incompatible. His Conjugal Affection you may gather from what has been hinted at already. He was equally a kind and tender Parent: But he did not think that Relation was to obliterate all others. His filial Piety and brotherly Love were peculiarly exemplary. In a Word, He was Religious without Enthusiasm; Zealous without Bigotry; and Learned without Pedantry.

Thus much for his Character, on which, I am persuaded, all that knew him will acknowledge there has been nothing said beyond the Life. A perfect Example of Virtue we can only learn from our Lord. Particular Instances of it we may borrow from those various Measures of Grace which he has conferr'd upon his Servants, distributing to each his peculiar Talents: Their Example we are to follow, even as they followed Christ, and no farther: And with this View I have set before you the Character above mentioned.

AND now, for what Reasons it pleased the Almighty to lay so severe an Hand upon his Servant, and render so many excellent Talents, with which he had endow'd him in a great Measure, useless; this, I say, is one of those Mysteries of Providence which we cannot expect to unfold till we come to the Land of Knowledge. But however, *we may talk of thy Judgements, Righteous art thou, O Lord, when we plead with thee!* That thou hast done it, who dost all Things wisely, is  
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to us a much surer Argument that it was good and just, than the Difficulties with which it is attended in our narrow Apprehensions, can be an Argument of the contrary. We may be deceived: But thou canst never err; Good is the Will of the Lord! It is so in itself; and with respect to the Righteous, it is universally so; for *we know that all Things work together for Good to them that love God.* I am verily persuaded, that our deceased Friend was of this Character, and that how grievously soever God afflicted him, it was in much Faithfulness; *For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.* This the Scripture tells us. But Ill-nature and Uncharitableness usually give a different Turn to such Misfortunes. What happens amiss to our selves, we are content enough should pass under the Notion of a Fatherly Chastisement; but if any Misfortune, more than common, befalls our Neighbours, it can be nothing better than a Judgement. But I need not stay to expose this censorious Temper: He, of whom I have been speaking, has himself done it sufficiently, in a Discourse on those Words of our Lord, (Luke xiii. 4, 5.) *Think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Which Discourse he published not long before he fell under the uncommon Disorder I have described. There have been many excellent Sermons that have appeared on that Text from the most eminent Preachers. But in the Opinion of the Judicious, he has cultivated the Argument in a Manner not inferior to any that have gone before him.

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NOTWITHSTANDING, there is a Use to be made of such extraordinary Instances, very consistent with Charity, and useful to Mankind: Though no Man knows the Love or Hatred of God by any of these Things, yet they serve to make his Power known, and call upon us to adore it.

OUR Friend was wont to represent the Matter in this View: And though he considered his Case as one of the greatest Difficulties in the moral Providence of God, he constantly represented it as a Demonstration of the Natural. For, according to his own Account of Things, he was a living Monument how far the Power of the Deity could extend itself in destroying its Workmanship. But to take the Matter as it was, it is undoubtedly a Proof of the Divine Power. For, surely, to continue the rational Faculties as it were entire, but to divest a Creature in his own Imagination of the Sense of them, which was in some measure the present Case, is not a less Act of Power than the actual Destruction of these Faculties. Great and marvellous are thy Works, O Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy Ways, O King of Saints! Now, as when all human Power and Wealth are at any Time remarkably rendered useless and vain, it is an Instruction to the rich Man, not to glory in his Riches; and to the mighty Man, not to glory in his Strength: So, from such an Instance as we have had before us, we may deduce this farther Caution, *Let not the wise Man glory in his Wisdom.*

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For how dieth the wise Man? as the Fool. And how many Ways is it to be conceived, that his Wisdom may even die before him? *Let him therefore that glorieth, glory in this only, that he understandeth and knoweth the Lord, who exerciseth Loving-kindness, Judgement and Righteousness in the Earth. For in these Things he delights.*

I MUST not conclude without a Word of Consolation to those more immediately affected by this Stroke, especially you, who by this Providence are rendered compleat Orphans. Your Loss is certainly very great, as every one will conclude from what has been already said. The more eminently your Father was distinguish'd by Religion and useful Knowledge, the greater is your Affliction, in being deprived of one, whose Life might have been very serviceable to you in both Respects. However, you must not sorrow as without Hope, nor so as to forget that comfortable Declaration of the Spirit; *Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.* This Blessedness he now partakes of; and therefore, however you may weep for your selves, you have no Cause to weep for him.

BESIDES, it may be some Consolation to you, that while he lived, he was useful in the World, and has left behind him a Reputation much beyond what is common. It will be an Advantage to you to have been descended from such a Stock; for a good Man leaveth an Inheritance to his Children. Let his Example animate you

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to your Duty; then shall the Blessings of the Covenant descend upon you: The Eternal God will not be ashamed to be called your Father. His Presence will make amends for every Friend on Earth you can be bereaved of. May he be your Guide through the World, and your Portion for ever. *Amen.*

I must not conclude without a Word of Consolation to those more immediately affected by this Stroke, especially you, who by this Providence are rendered complete Orphans. Your Loss is certainly very great, as every one will conclude from what has been already said. The more especially your Father was distinguished by his great Virtues, and his great Affliction is your Affliction. In your whole Life you have been very serviceable to you in both Kingdoms; you must not sorrow as without Hope, for as to forget that comfortable Declaration of the Spirit; Blessings the Lord that in the Lord, for they rest in their Father's Love. **S. I. N. I.** This Blessedness he now partakes of; and therefore, however you may weep for your selves, you have no Cause to weep for him.

Besides, it may be some Consolation to you, that while he lived, he was useful in the World. **S. I. N. I.** It will be an Advantage to you to have been defended from such a Stroke; for a good Man leaves an Inheritance to his Children. Let his Example animate you to